

Dish Omaha – April 30th, 2025

Jeff: Time now for another edition of Dish Omaha featuring KVNO's resident foodie, there she is, Diane Watson. Diane.

Diane: Good morning, Jeff.

Jeff: Good morning.

Diane: Well, the weather's getting warmer. What constitutes the start of summer for you?

Jeff: Well, I could guess that maybe Cinco de Mayo.

Diane: Very good. You looked at your calendar this morning. Well done. Cinco de Mayo really marks the beginning of summer for me. Do you know what Cinco de Mayo is about?

Jeff: Tell me more.

Diane: Well, I bet you can.

Jeff: Because I only think food.

Diane: Well, that's all you need to think about. But it really is a celebration of the Mexican Army's unexpected victory over French forces at the Battle of Puebla on May 5th, 1862. They were very poorly equipped. They were not expected to win. It did not end the French occupation, but it was a great battle. And like all people who like to celebrate, they thought, let's make this a party. So, it was primarily celebrated in the state of Puebla with parades and speeches and reenactments. But in the U.S., it became popular in the 20th century in California for the first time.

So, one thing I thought we'd talk about today is five Mexican dishes to try if you've never had them before. We all know tacos and burritos. How about a tamale? Do you like tamales?

Jeff: It's one of the first things I actually I ever had as a kid.

Diane: Wow.

Jeff: I'm a South O kid.

Diane: That's true. Well, for those who haven't tried them, they're corn dough with fillings, usually meats, cheeses, chilies, wrapped in a corn husk and steamed. So, the flavors are very intense. How about ceviche?

Jeff: Yeah, I love it.

Diane: Do you have a favorite kind?

Jeff: No.

Diane: Well, it's usually shrimp.

Jeff: Diane, you put something tasty in front of me.

Diane: I know. You're going to eat it.

Jeff: I'm going to eat it. I'll ask questions later. (laughter)

Diane: There you go. It's usually shrimp or fish “cooked” (and I'm using like air quotes) in lime because the acid will partially cook the fish with tomatoes, onions, cilantro, chilies and served on chips a lot of times. So, it's kind of like a protein packed salsa. How about elote?

Jeff: No idea.

Diane: Street corn.

Jeff: Oh, oh sure!

Diane: Right. You've probably had it before.

Jeff: I have.

Diane: Usually they put mayo, chili powder, cheese, lime on it. It's so flavorful, so fresh.

Jeff: Followed with a chaser of floss.

Diane: Absolutely. Put some in your pocket. (laughter) I know you know carnitas.

Jeff: Of course.

Diane: Carnitas is a slow cooked pork. It's a very beloved Mexican dish that means little meats. And it's typically slow cooked, tender, very flavorful, braised, simmered in its own fat. There's tons of things you can do with carnitas. Put it in a burrito, put it on a taco, put it in your hand, just eat it. So great. And how about sopes?

Jeff: Yep.

Diane: Those are thick corn tortillas with refried beans, lettuce, salsa, cheese, sour cream, kind of a little more like a traditional taco.

Jeff: What are you doing to me?

Diane: More traditional. And of course, for me, the margarita. So, there's lots of theories around who created the margarita, what the history is. But my favorite is attributing it to Margaret Margarita Samez, a socialite from Dallas, Texas. In 1948, she was vacationing in Acapulco, and she mixed a drink for her friends that had tequila, lime juice and Contra. You can also use triple sec. And it was a hit.

Jeff: Huh. Really?

Diane: And her friends spread the word about the delicious cocktail and named it after her. Now, to celebrate Cinco de Mayo, you should have all of these foods and a couple of margaritas.

Jeff: (laughter)

Diane: But you could also attend the Omaha Cinco de Mayo Festival, which is May 9th through the 11th in South Omaha. You've probably been, having grown up there.

Jeff: My old stomping grounds, of course.

Diane: Exactly. It's at 24th Street and N, is the Plaza de las Raza. There's something for everybody. There's a family fair. They have a mariachi mass, which sounds really fun. A parade, live concerts, music. This is the longest running ethnic festival in Omaha.

Jeff: No kidding.

Diane: This year will be its 105th year.

Jeff: That's incredible.

Diane: And the event has won a Henry Fonda award in 2023.

Jeff: I did not know that.

Diane: Lots of ways to celebrate. So, Feliz Cinco de Mayo, Jeff.

Jeff: Thank you so much, Diane. Let's go get a bite to eat.

Diane: Done.